

Lim: Do they fear what Dr M might say?
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Bede Hong

A routine meeting of the parliamentary select committee on integrity was apparently cancelled because members were told of a proposal to call former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad to testify on 'Project IC'.

Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang attributed the decision to a fear what the former premier might say should he turn up.

Former Sabah chief minister, Bernard Dompok (photo) chairs the 12-member committee. Apart from Lim and PAS MP Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman, the other members are from the ruling Barisan Nasional.

When contacted, Bernard said he would issue a statement later today on this matter.

Lim told a press conference in the Parliament lobby this afternoon that he had sent a text-message to all committee members to remind them about the meeting.

"But last evening, the meeting was cancelled. And it coincided with my phone call (suggesting) that Dr Mahathir should be called as a witness, to appear before the (committee) on 'Project Mahathir' (as Project IC is also dubbed, in reference to Mahathir's name).

"This is because, for the first time, Mahathir has spoken on the issue in an exclusive interview with malaysiakini."

In the interview last month, Mahathir disclosed that some individuals in Sabah may have been involved in the issuance of identity cards to foreigners to secure votes for Umno. But he dismissed the suggestion that any such project was sponsored by Umno or the government.

Given these comments, Lim said it "would be a good idea for him to appear" before the committee.

"I said I'd be raising the proposal at this morning's meeting ... then suddenly the meeting was called off. Why? "Is it because the members are a bit nervous that this proposal is being raised? Are they are nervous that Mahathir will come?"

"This is very fishy and very extraordinary. Never before has it happened....I wonder why the meeting has been called off. This is very unusual."

'Appropriate person'

Lim said that, as former premier, Mahathir would be the most appropriate person to speak about the presence of illegal immigrants in Sabah.

He could also speak on corruption "especially after saying that corruption is more serious than when he was prime minister for 22 years".

"I think the possibility that Mahathir (photo) would appear before (the committee) cannot be

ruled out. And of course if he attends, a lot of people would be upset because you don't know what he is going to say.

"I don't know whether Mahathir will come. Of course you cannot force him to come. You can only invite him."

It has been claimed that, as a result of the project, there are about 1.75 million foreigners in Sabah today, compared to 1.5 million locals.

According to claims, a secret meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the project attended by, among others, then Deputy Home Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub (photo) and chief secretary to the government, Ahmad Sarji.

Ahmad was said to have opposed the plan, but was told that Mahathir had already given his approval.

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